



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

HARVARD THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

VOLUME III.

JULY, 1910.

NUMBER 3.

IS CHRISTIANITY A MORAL CODE OR A RELIGION?

L. HENRY SCHWAB

NEW YORK

The answer to this question comes with great readiness from a host of those who tell us that the meaning of Christianity is summed up in a code of ethical principles. The endless strife of theological tongues has led weary souls to take refuge in the apparent simplicity of the moral law; the stress of the modern social problem has prompted others to fix their exclusive attention upon the Christian rule of conduct as offering the final solution. And so we hear from all sides the many voices that unite in the swelling chorus, whose burden is the lofty ethical precepts of the Sermon on the Mount or the noble utterances of the Hebrew prophets as the sum and substance of all essential Christianity: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"; "Do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with thy God,"—Christianity means this and nothing more.

The assertion of an essentially moral Christianity comes to us backed with the authority of high scholarship. In the *Hibbert Journal* of October, 1908, in an article entitled "How may Christianity be Defended Today?" Professor McGiffert tells us that "to promote the reign of sympathy and service among men was the controlling purpose of Christ Himself," that "modern study of Jesus has made this very clear, and we are recognizing with a unanimity never reached in other days that it was for this Jesus labored and for this He summoned men to follow Him." The fact that this article, in spite of its confused reasoning and its inconclusiveness, is said to have been translated into several foreign languages, proves the strong hold which the moral interpretation of Christianity has obtained.

It is the purpose of the following pages to examine this view. We ask: What do the records teach? Do they permit the interpretation of Christianity as a set of moral laws? or do they imply something else, the religious or spiritual?

We have nothing to do with miracle, nor with any historic occurrences as such. Our inquiry is into the nature of that particular truth, or set of truths or principles, touching human life which Christ placed before the world and which the Church accepted as the Christian interpretation of life. It is perfectly possible, and it will serve a good purpose, to separate the historic events as such from the spiritual or philosophical teaching, and the reader will remember that our task is thus strictly limited.

In addressing ourselves to the subject, we are first of all impressed with a certain confusion of ideas. When we hear all this talk about Christianity being intended to regulate the social life of man, we are led to suspect a certain lack of reflection upon the essential difference between morality and religion. Let us clear our minds upon this point. Morality needs no definition. But, while the moral truths are addressed preëminently to the will, religious truths are for the reason. They concern the mystery of life; their subject-matter is God and immortality. Upon these they give or pretend to give a revelation. "Thou shalt not steal" is a moral law; "God is love" is a religious truth. The two are dissimilar. The nature of their relation is one of the fundamental questions of life; but they may be kept theoretically and practically dissociated. There are men who are moral but not religious, others are religious but not moral. Christianity offers no novelty to the moral sentiment of mankind except an example; its ethics are the same as those of other systems. What is new in Christianity belongs rather to the religious sphere.

This religious element is now to be ruled out. If we are to believe the apostles of the new Christianity, most of what eighteen centuries have innocently believed of Christ, his conception of a life in the spirit, was based upon an illusion. Christ thought of none of these things. At least he cared very little about them. What was ever on his mind was the welfare of "society." What he did was to affirm or reaffirm the maxims upon which life,

especially the social life, should be built. He gave to the world (to use the modern jargon) the dynamic of social evolution.

Is it possible to form a reasonable picture of the historic Christ upon the basis of a purely moral Christianity? Let us see. We should have to conceive of a Christ whose mind was filled with moral ideas and ideals. Religious conceptions were wholly secondary—the sediment perhaps of the Jewish traditions of which he had not quite divested himself. We should think of Christ somewhat as we do of the author of the Epistle of St. James, whose interest centred in moral and social questions, to whose mind “pure religion and undefiled” meant simply “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world,” but whose moral Christianity was garnished by certain religious principles: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.”

Such a Christ—a Christ whose ideals were wholly moral, to whom religious ideas were secondary—is indeed not the Christ whom his followers have pictured for us. They were therefore misled. We may perhaps imagine that this misleading was due to certain currents of thought prevalent at the time. We know that ideas distinctly religious or spiritual had come into the empire and were very wide-spread in the first centuries of the Christian era. These ideas gathered about the cults which had been introduced from the East, of Cybele, of Isis and Serapis, and of Mithra. Few pages of religious history are more interesting than those which describe the nature and the prevalence of these ancient forms of Oriental worship. They were intensely spiritual. They carried with them and made prominent such spiritual ideas as New Birth, Mediation, Immortality, Fellowship with the Divine.

You may conceive the followers of Christ to have come under their influence. They may have been carried away by this spiritual wave, and so Christianity may have become tinged with a foreign coloring. They therefore let go what was essential in Christ's teaching and seized what was merely accidental and traditional. This they magnified and passed off as the kernel of Christianity. All subsequent generations continued to cherish the error, and it was reserved for the wise men of the nineteenth

and twentieth centuries to discover and correct the mistake and to restore the Christian religion to its pristine significance as the religion of moral and social progress.

Such is at least a thinkable hypothesis, equal in probability to other modern reconstructions. But does it correspond to the facts?

We have two assertions to examine: (1) that Christ's essential purpose was a moral one, (2) that his followers misunderstood him. Let us begin with the second of these.

If such a misunderstanding actually took place, it must have been immediate, at the very beginning; it must have taken place among the personal disciples of Christ, among the very men who knew him in the flesh, who sat at his feet and listened to his words and witnessed his actions. The spiritual or religious conception of Christ did not come in slowly and gradually displace the moral idea of him. Our records know nothing else but that from the very beginning Christ was acknowledged and believed in as a spiritual leader and teacher.

The proof is not difficult. In all the uncertainty which criticism has thrown around our New Testament records there are certain facts which every candid man must accept as genuinely historic. The first and foremost of these is St. Paul. Sober criticism has not questioned the historic character of St. Paul or his authorship of at least the four great Epistles. With him we stand on firm historic ground, and he is a witness whose character and sanity commend him to our confidence.

The theory which was once made the basis of a reconstruction of early Christian history, that St. Paul, representing gentile Christianity, stood irreconcilable over against the Jewish Christianity of the Twelve, has long been abandoned. We have learned to realize how closely identified was the Christianity of the Apostle with that of the original Twelve. The man who after his conversion went to Jerusalem and lived fifteen days with St. Peter (Gal. 1 18), who later again entered into conference with the apostles, to whom the "pillars" gave the right hand of fellowship (Gal. 2 9), who for a year lived among Jewish Christians at Antioch (Acts 11 26), who had the companionship of such men as Barnabas and Mark and others "of the circumcision" (Col. 4 10 f.) must

have been, in all essentials, in close agreement with the original apostles. But St. Paul's conception of Christianity is spiritual through and through. (To most minds this will appear self-evident; we shall return to the subject later.) We may therefore gather that the twelve apostles shared St. Paul's belief in a Christianity essentially religious or spiritual.

This conclusion is confirmed by the testimony of the Acts of the Apostles. The historicity of this book has lately met with strong indorsement, and in regard to many of the main facts can hardly be disputed. Thus we cannot doubt that the manifold witness of the Acts to the preaching of the resurrection as the burden of the apostolic message is true to history. The Christ, whose rising from the dead—however they came to that belief—they announced whenever they spoke, who was to St. Peter a "Prince of Life" (3 15), a "Prince and Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (5 31), who was "ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (10 42), this Christ was, in the minds of the apostles, something more than a moral reformer.

There is no avoidance of the conclusion that the apostles believed in Christ as a spiritual leader or revealer, not merely as a moral reformer. If this belief represents a misunderstanding of Christ, then it was the apostles who misunderstood him. But that the apostles who had lived familiarly with Christ, who had been his co-workers, should have so radically misconstrued his meaning or allowed themselves, after Christ's death, to be swept away by any wave of religious thought or feeling,—this proposition most men will find it difficult to accept.

But suppose the seemingly impossible to have taken place,—and historical research warns us to make large allowances,—suppose that, in those mysterious years after Christ's resurrection, which hide so many secrets, this misconception did somehow creep in, that Christ's mission came to be misunderstood, we should in that case confidently expect that the real Christ, the moral reformer, should somewhere have left some traces of himself and of his real mission. There must somewhere have been some who understood Jesus, and in the literature that has come down to us we shall surely discover some remains of the

original conception, some trace, however slight, of the existence of the correct valuation of Christ as a moral reformer.

But the closest examination of the Christian literature covering about one hundred years after Christ's resurrection, whether canonical or extra-canonical, discovers no remains of a supposedly original moral conception of Jesus. The emphasis upon morality in a few of the writings, in the Epistle of St. James, in the Shepherd of Hermas, the Teaching of the Twelve, and later in the Apostolic Constitutions, does not in the least invalidate this conclusion.

We pass to the other of the two propositions made at the beginning of this paper: that Christ's essential purpose was a moral one. We take up the records of Christ's life and try to discover the ideas of human life embodied in Christ's life and teaching.

And here, we may suspect, we have come to the source and fountain-head of the statements, so far as they proceed from professed critics, claiming for Christ's mission an essentially moral character. For in the gospels we are no longer on the same firm historic ground, such as the epistles of St. Paul afford. The Synoptic Gospels are compilations. Many, as St. Luke tells us, had "taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which have been fulfilled among us." From these many efforts at writing the story of Christ our evangelists culled what approved itself to them, sometimes giving to the original statements of their sources the individual coloring of their own minds, and we are led to look back from the revisions to the sources.

Here we have a free field and open course for the analytical faculty. The critic takes up his task and the gospel story is dissected. In this process the personal equation of the critic is quite as important a factor as the scientific principles of investigation, and the results vary in accordance with personal mental and moral idiosyncrasies. The latter in their turn are influenced by the spirit of the age, and so it may happen that in an age of intense social striving like the present, the critic, losing his hold upon the great religious principles that outlast all ages, and carried away by the gust of present-day enthusiasm, may think he discovers in Christ a great moral reformer.

The problem of the Synoptic Gospels has for many years been an object of inquiry. We are not called upon to enter into the intricacies of this problem. We only refer to some of its salient features in the present state of the investigation.

It has been the ambition of scholars to discover and reproduce the sources of our gospels, and a large amount of success has in these latter years crowned their efforts. Thirty-eight years ago Professor Bernhard Weiss, in a work whose acute and thorough criticism has perhaps never been surpassed, made out the text of what he called the "Apostolic Source." Others have carried on the task, and the latest worker in this field, Professor Harnack, today reproduces the "source" of St. Matthew and St. Luke in a form which he calls "Q." At the same time strenuous efforts are being made by scholars, by means of comparisons and by the aid of patristic quotations, to ascertain the *ipsissima verba* of Christ.

An intense desire for historic accuracy prompts the efforts of New Testament criticism. But while scholars are doing their best to get back to the original and trustworthy substance of the gospel narrative and to the assured words of Christ, they seem all unconscious of another and larger problem which their praiseworthy efforts make importunate.

This problem may be briefly stated thus: Where is the plain Christian man to go for his knowledge of Christ?

We are not dealing with an ordinary human life, whose record may be very interesting no doubt, but interesting only to a small group of intelligent and educated people. It is certainly an object worth considerable effort to ascertain the exact facts of Caesar's life. But how many are interested in Caesar compared with those who are interested in Christ? What is the vital concern in the life of Caesar, compared with that which makes the Christian world cling to Christ as the world's Master?

What, then, are the prospects for the countless multitudes who want to know of Christ? Shall they patiently wait until the critics issue a new edition of the gospel? We have little hope of such a revised gospel. Not even on the principles which are to govern the revision are the doctors agreed. We may be sure that the Christian world will not accept its

gospel from the exponents of modern criticism. Biblical criticism has achieved great results and will continue its appointed task, but it is a very specialized function of theological activity, and critics have too often been influenced by prejudice and lacking in sympathetic imagination, when they have attempted to rise above their specialty, and the world will not acquiesce in their dicta upon questions which involve a delicate appreciation of larger issues.

Shall we then accept the suggestion (which we remember seeing somewhere made by an eminent scholar) that every individual should investigate the authenticity and credibility of a text before he makes use of it? How few are competent to do this! This principle would surely make of Christianity an esoteric religion and the glorious boast of its democratic character would be a thing of the past. To suggestions of this nature, which would remove the gospel of Christ beyond the reach of all but the specially trained, we are bound to oppose a decided negative. The Christian world must have an open gospel accessible to the plain man.

But this does not remove the difficulty which the suspicion cast upon the gospel record has made, and we are bound to find a way out. In attempting to do so, it will perhaps become evident that the difficulty itself is caused by a misunderstanding. We shall therefore suggest three propositions which seem to us to embody the truths necessary to enable us to see our way more clearly through the cloud of uncertainty which the analysis and criticism of our records have brought down upon the great religious problems.

(1) The fundamental question of fact in the Christian religion, the resurrection of Christ, as a question touching an historical event, must submit to a strict historical investigation. While it is true that belief in this fact will depend largely upon the spiritual discernment of the meaning and value of Christ's life, yet the intellectual appreciation of the historical conditions must always be fundamental to an assured judgment.

(2) Only very few religious truths are vital for our life. There are few things in the religious sphere today more important than the realization of this simple fact; and yet the simplicity of

religious truth is often grievously misunderstood. Professor Henry Sidgwick, in speaking of trust in God's fatherhood as expressed in one of Tennyson's stanzas, called this trust "the indestructible and inalienable minimum of faith." It was a strange misapprehension for so clear a thinker. Trust in God is surely the maximum of Christian faith. It marks the very top-most summit of conviction to which the human spirit can attain. Whoever in this world of contradictory phenomena attains to a faith in God needs little else. You may add just one more article, the belief in immortality, and you may say, It was to establish and make firm these two foundation-pillars of human life that Christ came, taught, and died. These two alone are vital.

(3) Finally, we are called upon to carry out to its logical conclusion the one assured result of modern criticism, the destruction of all human infallibility. The doctrine of an infallible Word, which never had any logical foundation, is by the work of the critic made quite untenable, and this negative principle must be accepted with all that it implies.

The implications of this principle are of the utmost importance in our practical religious life. It cuts the ground from under a certain easy-going attitude towards modern criticism. It is not uncommon to hear it said that criticism has really made little difference with the Bible, that it has rather strengthened our belief in the Bible. With such vague assertions the fears of the timid are quieted.

As a matter of fact, it would be difficult to exaggerate the revolution which the new attitude to the Bible is bringing over the church. We are only at the very beginning of the change. Only a few scholars today realize what it means; "the general public," as a recent writer has said, "is still unable to recognize any middle ground between the acceptance of the teachings of the Bible as authoritative 'from cover to cover' and the 'rejection' of the Bible." The process from a Bible-religion to the historical conception of Christianity will doubtless be a painful one. What strange forms religion will assume no one can guess, and one might well view with alarm the coming development, were it not for the conviction that the guiding hand of Providence shapes the destinies of the church and in the end the truth will be vindicated.

The practical conclusion of what criticism has achieved is just this, that there can be no certainty of any detail of our gospel story. We cannot say that a given proposition is true because Christ said it, for the reason that we are never sure what Christ really did say. We shall never be able to say of any detail of his life, It happened so and so. Careful research may increase the likelihood of the authenticity of certain passages, but we can never be sure. Who can tell whether the source underlying the common passages of St. Matthew and St. Luke reported correctly? Who can tell what degree of authority St. Peter gives to the Gospel of St. Mark, whom Papias calls Peter's "interpreter"? To this ultimate conclusion, then, of practical uncertainty of details we come as the one assured result of modern criticism.

Fortunately, the details of Christ's life and teaching are not of the most vital importance to the practice of the Christian religion. When we realize that Christ brought no new law, that Christianity is not a code of ethics and the Bible is not a collection of oracles, when we remember that Christianity stands for a few great vital truths, we are ready to let the details go.

For if each detail is uncertain, the same is not true of the mass of details. If no single word or sentence is lifted above doubt, that cannot be said of the whole of all the words and sentences. As regards the general impression of Christ's life, we stand on ground totally different from the evidence for single words or events. We may not be able to trace with accuracy the position and direction of each line, but the picture as a whole is perfectly clear. The figure of Christ, the impression of what he was and meant to be to the world, has stood before mankind these eighteen centuries, and no criticism can destroy that impression. It is here, therefore, in the large features of that unique life, that we find our certainty. Neither can one say, as we trust will become evident in the sequel, that the picture of Christ which the Christian world has enshrined in its heart, is that of the Fourth Gospel, and is therefore faulty, or at least questionable.

The reader will again call to mind what was said at the beginning of this paper: we have here nothing to do with the miraculous

as an element in the life of Christ. We set that quite aside for our present purpose. What we desire to gain is the knowledge of one aspect of what Christ stood for, and we find it not only in what he taught, but in the principles which he embodied in his activity and in his habits of thought. We are far from denying, indeed we strenuously affirm, that the supernatural is an essential element in our conception of Christ, but we claim that Christianity as a religion may be, in theory, separated from Christianity as embodied in certain events in history. The two stand as separate interests of theological inquiry.

And so, guided by the principles as we have stated them, we shall examine the other of the two propositions which we found to underlie this theory of a purely moral Christianity, the proposition that Christ's essential purpose was a moral one.

In order to test this statement we shall endeavor to extract from the gospels a formula which shall express Christ's attitude to life. If we can do this, we shall have satisfied our immediate purpose and shall be able to judge of the correctness of the opposing theory. We shall then go a step further and examine more carefully the leading principles such as they were received and held by the early Church. We shall endeavor to ascertain how far these principles, which we have so far assumed to embody a spiritual as opposed to a moral conception of Christianity, agree with Christ's attitude towards life.

Let us first take the direct teaching of our Lord. Whoever studies this must be impressed with the fact that there is really little direct moral teaching in the record of Christ's activity. Almost all of it is comprised within the Sermon on the Mount. More significant, however, than this is the fact that behind the moral there is usually the recognition of the spiritual. Christ's morality almost invariably has a spiritual coloring or bearing, which leads us to understand that in his mind religion is inseparable from morality.

A few illustrations will make this clear. A modern secular moralist might say that purity of heart is a noble and exalting virtue: Christ says, "The pure in heart shall *see God*." Our social reformers might say that peaceableness is a highly "social" and therefore commendable virtue: Christ says that

peacemakers shall be called the *children of God*. And so with most of Christ's moral exhortations, they have a spiritual point or reference: persecutions shall bring great reward in heaven.—He tells us what sort of righteousness is requisite for admission to the kingdom of heaven; God's love is the measure for ours; God's perfection is the standard for ours. And so on, through the rest of the Sermon, as any one can read. Everywhere we see the traces of Christ's habit of mind, the turning from the earthly to the heavenly, that heavenly-mindedness which is so strikingly expressed in this same Sermon: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." It is a hasty judgment that finds in the Sermon on the Mount the kernel of Christianity, and conceives of that discourse as a set of moral aphorisms.

It is undoubtedly an easy task to pick out from Christ's sayings those which appeal to our preconceived ideas of what he represented, and proclaim, Here is the true and genuine gospel. Thus we find it written that Christ said, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise," and "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." These and other expressions like them are put forward, and it is claimed that these express the mind of Christ, that this is Christianity.

We call attention to a few other words outside of the Sermon on the Mount, expressing direct moral teaching, which show the same spiritual references. So in the warning against idle words, of which account shall be given in the day of judgment (Matt. 13 36), in the commendation of childlike humility, which makes a man great in the kingdom of heaven (18 4), in the warning against giving offence, where it is better to enter into life halt or maimed rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire, etc. (18 8 f.), in the insistence upon self-denial, where Christ contrasts the material and the spiritual, the world and the soul (Mark 8 36), in the reference of the divorce question to God's intent at the creation (10 6), in the warning against those who lay up treasure for themselves and are not rich towards God (Luke 12 21).

The conception of a morality without religious sanction is in fact wholly out of place as applied to Christ. It attributes to him what is quite foreign to his mind. The Hebrew Wisdom-literature does indeed show us that a secular morality was not unknown among the Jews of Christ's time; but our Lord was certainly untouched by it. To Christ's mind the ethical life was simply the doing of God's will. This is his definition, given with a good deal of distinctness: in Matt. 7 21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"; in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done"; in Matt. 12 50, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." The rule of right living was to Christ not an abstract law, a command appealing to the ethical consciousness of the individual, it was the will of a living Father appealing to the obedience of his children.

All moral relationships are determined by this consideration of man's attitude to God. If right-doing is obedience, wrong-doing is sin, and the gospels know much of sin. Christ began his ministry by preaching repentance and enforced the necessity of repentance, he taught his disciples to pray for forgiveness, he forgave sinners, and in one instance, that of the lame man let down from the roof (Mark 2 5), he seemed to recognize the forgiveness of the man's sins as the necessary preliminary to the recovery of bodily health.

Sin is the offence against a living God, the will of man opposing itself to the will of the heavenly Father, which must be repented of and be forgiven. These ideas are indelibly impressed upon the gospel record, but they have no place in a purely moral system, and one is at a loss to know how their presence in the gospels can be explained by those to whom Christ is no more than a moral reformer. No man could speak of sin, repentance, and forgiveness as Christ did, who was not penetrated through and through with the belief that man's attitude to God is the constitutive principle of life.

Christ's teaching of faith comes within the same category, as arising from a spiritual view of life. The emphasis which the

gospels place on faith is very significant. Faith is recognized or demanded as a condition of healing: in the centurion (Matt. 8 10), the man sick of the palsy (Mark 2 5), the woman with the bloody issue (Matt. 9 22), the blind man (9 29), the woman of Canaan (15 28), the leper (Luke 17 19), the father of the lunatic boy (Mark 9 23), whom Christ tells that "all things are possible to him that believeth." The disciples are rebuked for lack of faith (Mark 4 40) and are taught that faith may remove mountains (Matt. 17 20, 21 21), the woman who was a sinner is commended for her faith (Luke 7 50), and Christ is said to have opened his ministry with a call to repentance and faith in the gospel (Mark 1 15).

What power of faith must there not have been in the mind of him who could calmly say (Mark 11 24) "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." What sense of the spiritual strength of faith is there not in the words to the distracted father (Mark 5 36) "Be not afraid, only believe."

One more reference: there is a melancholy recognition of Peter's moral weakness in our Lord's words to him near the end (Luke 22 31), "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"—and what follows? A hope or prayer that Peter's weak will may be strengthened, his moral nature fortified? Not at all. He who had a true insight into human nature went deeper: "I have prayed for thee that *thy faith* fail not."

Here we find the same evidence as in the moral teaching of the temper of Christ's mind. It is the temper of one who dwells chiefly on the things not seen, who believes in the vital power for human life of spiritual forces.

We have seen that the direct moral teaching is a small element in our gospels. A large proportion of the story is taken up with the accounts of Christ's healings and with the parables, which convey a variety of teaching including the moral and explain the nature and the future of the kingdom of God. Then there are the prophetic discourses.

Among other subjects taught is the infinite value of the human soul, trust in Providence and the love of God: not even a sparrow

falleth to the ground without the Father, and the prodigal son returning is clasped in his father's bosom. These are spiritual, not moral, teachings.

Finally, we read how Christ prayed (Mark 1 35, 6 46, Luke 6 12, 9 18, 28, 11 1, 22 41), how he taught his disciples to pray and enforced his teaching by a parable "to this end that men ought always to pray" (Luke 18 1), and warned them in the Sermon on the Mount against mechanical prayer.

Christ's teaching by parables—interesting in itself as perhaps a unique example of this form of teaching—gives us a most instructive insight into his habit of mind. Their significance is that they show how Christ saw everywhere in the material world types of the spiritual. To interpret the parables as allegories is to misunderstand them. The parable of the Sower has often lost its power, because like an allegory its meaning was supposed to hinge on a translation of each detail, each kind of soil, each feature of the process, into its meaning. Rather, it brings before us a law of the natural world by which Christ would make us understand the analogous process in the spiritual world. And so with the other parables: they show that Christ's mind dwelt in the region of spiritual truths, that to him the things that are seen were but the types of the things that are not seen. All that he saw on earth pointed to heaven. In the ways of men and of things he saw a visible embodiment of what obtained in the other world, invisible but to him most real.

Christ began his ministry with the announcement that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1 15) and to establish the kingdom of God was the great object of his endeavor. It represented, if we may say so, our Lord's philosophy of history. We moderns have heard much of the "onward march of civilization"; "social progress" is on every tongue; "evolution" is a commonplace of our talk. All these represent modern ways of thinking. Christ too had his views of society, his notions of progress. They differed from those of our professors of sociology chiefly in that they were religious. The kingdom of God takes its beginning on earth, its consummation is in heaven. God is the directive power in this conception of society, and the moving forces in its realization are spiritual.

Finally, we may consider one more fact in Christ's mental life. There is one passage in our gospels which opens to our view an insight into our Lord's mental attitude towards the beauties of nature. The reference of course is to Matt. 6 28: "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." As the passage is unique of its kind, it is worth while to observe that it occurs in substantially the same form in St. Luke (12 27) and therefore must have been derived from the source underlying St. Matthew and St. Luke and shares whatever authority attaches to this document.

Christ claims for the common wayside flower—our daisy or dandelion—a beauty which casts the greatest earthly glory in the shade. Such an appreciation of beauty is rare. It requires the high soul of a Wordsworth to open modern eyes to the beauty of every-day things; surely here is where the poet learned his lesson.

We have in our own time opened once more the book of nature and we are learning to know nature's beauty. In the literature that has grown up around this topic there is no more deeply cut dividing line than that which marks off the mere physical from the spiritual appreciation of beauty. There is a world's remove between those souls who rejoice only in the richness of coloring and the perfection of outline and those in whose eyes color and form are the mysterious adumbrations of that which is beyond the veil. Where did Christ stand? The next verse tells: "*If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*" From the lily his mind rose to the creator of the lily, earth's beauty pointed him to heaven.

In searching the records for that which was uppermost in the mind of Christ, we have, except in the last instance, disregarded the question of authority for each separate quotation. This is in accordance with the principle which we laid down. Not one of the sayings of Christ comes to us with the seal of surety, each stands under question as to its authenticity. But there can hardly be a doubt, when so many indications point to the same conclusion, when such a multitude of references, so many lines of in-

quiry, lead to the same result, that the features of Christ's mental life are and remain fixed and determined.

We have seen the many-sided testimony to the spiritual in Christ's mind and intention, against which can be set, as arguing a purely moral Christ, only a few ethical aphorisms, some of the beatitudes, the golden rule, and a few other sentences. It is impossible to account for such a consensus of testimony to the predominantly spiritual character of Christ's views and his habits of thought, unless behind the testimony lies the fact. For that Christ's words and acts should have been so laboriously falsified with the intent of making him out different from what he was, or that a picture so harmonious in its details should have been the result of fortuitous accretions,—either of these theories is for sober historical research simply out of the question.

Is it possible—we now ask—to express this spiritual element in Christ's revelation in a single phrase? In answer to this question we venture to suggest that *the spirituality of life* expresses that for which Christ stood, both in his teaching and by every other manifestation of his mind.

Mankind has found in Christ the hope and promise of a future life. He has "brought life and immortality to light." But we recognize that Christ's attitude towards the question of immortality is very different from that which we moderns occupy. Christ did not make the distinction between the present and the future life as we do. Our notions of "another life" were alien to him, and when he was asked a question about the "resurrection" such as we might ask him, his answer shows that he was not at home in that way of thinking: "As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22 31 f.).

The difference is that our views are secular, Christ's were spiritual. To us the physical universe, what we call the hard facts of life, are the substantial realities; to Christ the deeper realities were the life of the soul, the groping for the higher, the desire for divine fellowship, all that part of human nature which testifies to a something more substantial, more abiding, than

what we know with our senses. It is this spiritual appreciation of life, with its endless outlook, an appreciation which carries with it the full acknowledgment of moral obligation, but which lifts morality into the higher sphere, where it is obedience: herein we find what is distinctive in Christ's attitude towards human nature, and such we believe is in the main the impression of Christ which the world's best instincts have accepted.

We pass on to inquire whether to this picture which the gospels draw of Christ there is a correspondence in the belief of the first Christians. Do they agree with Christ? Is the Christian conception of human life in the New Testament outside the gospels the same as that recorded of Christ?

There could hardly be a perfect agreement. If we remember how the light of religious truth is always broken by the prism of individual minds, how the quality of faith varies with personal characteristics, with the disposition, with the needs of the individual soul, we shall realize how impossible it is to expect an exact agreement between the conceptions of Christ and the conceptions of the first Christians. But when we have recorded the variations, we shall see whether essentially the same estimate of life does not underlie the other conceptions and that of Christ alike.

The first History of the Church gives us little help in defining the Christianity of the first generation. We have already seen that the Acts of the Apostles, in the early chapters, before the author turns to the history of St. Paul, records the announcement of the resurrection as the burden of the apostolic message. This was the one overwhelmingly important fact to those who had just become aware of it, and it was natural that it should fill their minds and leave little room for reflection as to its meaning. Christ had risen: that one great fact was the first to be proclaimed to the world and it wins our confidence in the Acts that it tells the story just as we should expect it to have happened.

We turn to St. Paul. We have already spoken of the theory which isolated St. Paul and made him antagonistic to the original Christian faith. This theory represents an aberration of modern criticism. A good deal of the apostle's reasoning is doubtless peculiar to himself. It is also true that St. Paul had his enemies

while he lived, that he was bitterly assailed in a later generation, and that the Church at large perhaps never rose to his high level. Yet in the spirituality of his teaching he stands by no means isolated, and we may certainly take him as one of the representatives of the Christianity of the first church.

In St. Paul we have to separate between the reflective theological reasoning and the record of his personal intimate spiritual experience. St. Paul's theology has been an important factor in the history of Christian thought. But it is not so much through his theological reflections as by his spiritual experience that he has so profoundly influenced the spiritual history of the world, and it is in these spiritual experiences, not in the reasoned deductions from them, that we shall find what Christianity was to St. Paul.

For our purposes therefore we must consider such passages as these:

Rom. 8 35 ff.: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine, or nakedness or peril or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors.

1 Cor. 15 57 f.: Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast.

2 Cor. 5 17: If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Gal. 5 1: Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" [if this is the correct translation].

Phil. 3 8, 13 f.: I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. . . . This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

1 Tim. 1 15: This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

If we compare St. Paul's spiritual attitude, as these and other like quotations bring it before us, with that of our Lord, we shall see that the two are not altogether homogeneous. Between the mind of Christ and the mind of St. Paul there is a great difference. Two new factors enter and differentiate St. Paul from Christ. The first is his personal relation to Christ. The

fact that he had found a saviour in Christ, that Christ had become to him the heaven-sent means to a new life, filled his soul. The second factor in St. Paul's religion was the consciousness of deliverance from the weight of sin, the sense of Christian liberty.

And yet, underneath these individual variations, the groundwork of St. Paul's conception, that which was deepest and underlay all else in his soul, was the same as that which was in Christ's mind. There is everywhere the same pervading sense of the spirituality of life. He had found the new life, the life of the spirit. The consciousness of a heaven, which had lain smothered under the killing weight of the Pharisaic system, leapt into flame at the touch of Christ. Like his master he found his home in the larger world, in which death is but an episode and in which the law is a loving obedience. He was "a new creature in Christ," his "conversation was in heaven," he "walked not after the flesh but after the spirit," he walked in "newness of life," and served in "newness of spirit," the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" beckoned him, the law of the spirit of life in Christ had made him "free from the law of sin and death," he knew "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

We have made no difference between the traditional thirteen epistles. They all share essentially the same spiritual conceptions, and if some are from other hands, there is added so much more testimony to the spirituality of early Christianity.

The writings of St. Paul have had a striking history. That, with all the opposition to him and the lack of appreciation, so many of his writings should have found their place in the canon, to be a perpetual witness to the true nature of Christianity, is surely a mark of providential guidance. And his influence throughout the centuries at the turning-points of Church history is most impressive. We learn how it was the recurrence to the religious principles of St. Paul that caused the better mind of the Church to return once and again from a Christian legalism to the spiritual appreciation of Christianity. For it was the deep spirituality of St. Paul, together with his proclamation of freedom in the spirit, that became the mainspring of religious reformations.

If, in the present uncertainty of the question, we may not accept the Fourth Gospel as a source for the study of Christ's life, yet the writings which go under the name of St. John serve as embodying a conception of Christianity current at the close of the first century. For our purpose we include the Apocalypse, with this reservation that, if it is by another pen, its spiritual view of the Christian life throws another weight into the scales in behalf of our contention.

As with St. Paul, so with St. John: we see at once that a certain factor enters in and colors his conceptions. For, although we may not hastily subscribe to the ready assumptions of many critics of the Fourth Gospel, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that some of the recorded words bear witness to the influence of Hellenic thought.

With other differences between St. John and the Synoptic Gospels, differences in the mode of presentation and the light thrown upon Jesus, we have here no concern. What we have to deal with is his conception of the Christian life, modified as it is through the influence of Hellenic ways of thinking. But if we abstract this alien ingredient, if we allow for the emphasis placed upon truth and knowledge, we find in the Johannine writings an intensified insistence upon the spirituality of life.

In the Synoptic Gospels the governing tendency of Christ's mind is betrayed by many unconscious indications. In St. John's writings the spirituality of the present life is expressed in direct and decided language: "This is eternal life that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (17 3); "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. . . . The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (5 24 f.); "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (11 25 f.); "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (1 3 14); "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 5 12); "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev.

21 6); "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (21 17).

Neither here nor in St. Paul does the spiritual exclude the moral, but both in St. Paul and in St. John the controlling conception of the Christian life is spiritual, and the spirituality of St. John is only more emphatically expressed than that of Christ according to the Synoptic Gospels.

We next take up the First Epistle of St. Peter. The freshness and spontaneity of this writing are most naturally explained by assuming the correctness of the tradition which ascribes it to the apostle. If the difficulties which it presents forbid this conclusion, it must have come from one who stood very close to the original source of the Christian revelation. As all other writings, so this epistle reflects the conditions of the times. Persecutions turned the eyes of the suffering Christians to the future rewards, when the trial of their faith "might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 7). There are moral exhortations, advice to servants, wives, and husbands, and admonitions to the elders. But throughout there runs the same ground-tone, the joyful recognition of the new life in Christ. They were elect "in sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 2); they were "born again" (1 23), were "built up a spiritual house" (2 5). Morality, as in the gospels, is obedience to God; they were to live, not "in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (4 2).

The Epistle of St. James stands by itself. As has already been indicated, its preponderating interest is moral, the spiritual is secondary.

It is not necessary to dwell upon Second Peter and Jude. They doubtless belong to a later time, and their polemic shows an advanced tendency, perhaps justified in all but its bitterness, away from the early simplicity towards a desire for orthodoxy. Otherwise their tone is not alien to the atmosphere of spirituality of the other writings.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, finally, we meet with another very marked tendency of the early times, which somewhat later found a leading exponent in the Epistle of Barnabas, the ten-

dency which looked upon the new religion as the perfection of the old, which dwelt upon prophecies and types and their fulfilment. But apart from this the Epistle to the Hebrews presents the same spiritual Christianity. Christ delivers "them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (2 15); he "became the author of salvation" (5 9); Christians are "partakers of the heavenly calling," "partakers of Christ" (3 1, 14), are bidden to "come boldly unto the throne of grace" (4 16); they "have tasted of the heavenly gift" and "the powers of the world to come" (6 4, 5); Christ has "obtained eternal redemption for us" (9 12), and we have "boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (10 19).

We need not go beyond the limits of the New Testament in our present examination; the canonical books are sufficient to make known to us what were the motive forces of the new religion. We have learned that each writing shows a personal factor, but that underlying this personal element there is, with one possible exception, the common recognition of the spirituality of life, and that in this they are in agreement with what we found to be the mind of Christ.

This conclusion—as must be evident to all unbiassed minds—but confirms the estimate in which the sober sense of men has commonly held the New Testament, especially in these modern times since it has become an open book. It has not stood for a code of morality, but it has stood for a life of "otherworldliness" (to use a newly coined, expressive word). What we found to be the deeper realities in the mind of Christ, the human aspirations for the heavenly ideal, are the realities which the New Testament as a whole has impressed upon the world. In this volume the best minds of the Christian generations have found the seal of approval upon their higher instincts; it has led men to know themselves as moral beings,—yes, but as much more, as beings accountable to God, as owners of a dignity with which the earth is not commensurate. The New Testament has brought to the sons of men the consciousness that they are the heirs of a larger inheritance, that they may lay claim to it now, that, while the physical part of man passes away, the spiritual lives forever, and it has ever called men to a life worthy of man's high destiny.

The early church did not maintain the spiritual level of the New Testament. A difference in tone soon begins to pervade the Christian literature. St. James had his successors, who placed more and more emphasis upon the moral. A process of deterioration began. There came to be a separation of two things which belong together. The spiritual was removed to the future and was recognized only as the promise of coming glory. The spirituality of the present was lost sight of. This life came to be conceived solely as under the moral law, though that moral law was still thought of as the will of God.

There began the fatal disruption of the Christian life: the ethical command on the one hand, and on the other the sanction of promised rewards and punishments, while the irrepresible spiritual nature turned to superstition to indemnify itself. For many centuries the Christian life was, for the masses of people, confined within the categories of command and retribution, and as a result the Christian religion has been charged with teaching a morality dependent upon future rewards and punishments. The injurious effects of this tendency have been felt even to our own time, and it has helped to obscure Christian spirituality.

Today new motives have come into play, and the chief cause of the moral interpretation of Christianity in our own time has been humanitarian zeal, desire for the improvement of man's condition, and for the healing of the terrible sores which afflict human society. It is a fine enthusiasm, but its one-sided ardor has narrowed its vision and has led it into serious misapprehensions. Its mistake is twofold. It fails to see that humanity presents deeper and more permanent questions to be solved than those of social improvement—what were the saving social truths to those who suffered in the Messina catastrophe?—and that Christianity is what it is today because it responds to the ultimate questions of life.

Moreover, it fails to grasp the fact that there can be no lasting and effective moral enthusiasm which has not its mainspring in the life of the spirit, the life which is at home in the higher realities. The history of the Christian centuries may be scanned from beginning to end, and no great moral reformation will be

discovered which was not based upon a religious revival, and it is idle to look for such in the future. What our human problems call for above all else is strength of character, and there can be no lasting strength of character which does not know repentance, forgiveness, and faith.

We shall quote the opinion of one whose comprehensive mind and large historic sympathy, added to the keenest critical insight, have given him a unique position in our generation. In his chapter on St. Augustine Professor Harnack says: "It is true that since the days of Leibnitz and the Illumination there has arisen a mighty opponent [to the religious conceptions of St. Augustine], an enemy who seemed for a century to have gained the upper hand, which reduced the Christian religion, so far as it allowed the latter any validity, to energetic action, and assigned to it the part of a joyous optimism, a mode of thinking which removed the living God to a distance and subordinated the religious to the ethical—but in our century this foe yielded, at least within the churches, to the power of the old conception" (*Dogmengeschichte*, iii, p. 66).

This paper has been written to prove that the conception of Christianity of which Harnack here speaks, and which he holds to be fatal to the highest interests of humanity, is contradictory of the religion of Christ and the apostles.

The question with which we have dealt ought to find its definite settlement in thoughtful and candid minds. It is aside from the problem of Christ's person and authority. That question will always receive different answers, because it involves the balancing of spiritual values which are beyond the reach of logical appeal.

But our problem is a purely historical and wholly intellectual one, and therefore it admits of a final conclusion. We submit that for the student of the early literature there is only one answer possible to the question which heads this article.